

JUNE'S STORY
REVISED FINAL MP3
(2:51)

I'm June. I very much identify as a woman with a disability---I was born with cerebral palsy.

I was diagnosed as having breast cancer in June of '02. My maternal grandmother had breast cancer. So I thought I was at risk.

The screening process for me for breast cancer has been a ordeal. It's been one which started with doctor saying you must have a psychological problem you can't seem to stay still when you're having a mammogram. So I tried to explain to him that it was about my disability and not about a psychiatric problem. So I finally found a provider who would listen to me. Once I found him, I stayed with him for many years.

I take charge and I say to the technician, listen don't tell me not to move, because I can't stay still on demand. And we'll work at this together. And what I find are the good technicians say thank you for telling me that, it's very helpful to know what works for you. And the bad ones, they just ignore me.

When you first get a mammogram you don't know what to expect. So it took a few years for me to figure out what might work for me. I think that things are easier now than they were before. More and more machines are more flexible in terms of positioning.

There are quite a few women who live with physical disabilities who don't get screened and the reason is that they have to go through so much crap. It takes a lot of emotional energy to go to begin with.

Don't let the system beat you down. Get what you need. You know your body better than anyone else. Insist on an accessible mammography; they exist out there. It's going to be harder maybe for some women than for others, but it's worth the battle to get what you need.

We need to be vigilant about understanding our disability and how it may affect any kind of condition---and communicate that to providers.

Breast screening-Well, I equate it with control over my health and wanting to maintain health in any way I can. If you value your life and your health and you'd like to be around for a long time, it may not be easy. It may take more energy, but it's worth it.